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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Twitter Turns 5!

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"Saying it like it is!"

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SPECIAL 2011 NOTE: ACEC has presented these annual swaps since 1996 (at least). This year, the Community Center has changed policy and cannot be scheduled for more than 1 month in advance. We regret this uncertainty but *must**** urge you to contact or visit the web site in late August / early September to make certain the tradition will be continuing.

This is where I say "From 71N in Columbus, use E.N. Broadway or Cooke Rd. Exits; East"

But aw, heck! Just pull out your GPS, cell phone, or Google Earth! Or if you're really retro, Mapquest it. Or if you're like me, find a map somewhere (I can mail you one if you want it and can accept <HTML>)

. All vintage computing and game platforms, etc. and of course Atari!! are invited
. Free for all! (vendors and shoppers!) Vendors, please contact us to reserve tables.
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Please feel free to copy and disseminate. Be certain to check the web page for other active swaps & meetings such as CCAG, Cols. Retro Gaming, etc.

If you try to contact me by "Reply To", please note that I work in the programming biz . i.e. I turn on my home computer about one time per two weeks.

Best,
Wayne

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Violent Video Games May Not Desensitize Kids!

"""""""""" EA To Buy PopCap Games!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

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Violent Video Games May Not Desensitize Kids

A long-standing concern among parents and researchers has been that young people who are exposed to violent video games may become desensitized to violent acts and images, but a new study suggests that may not be the case.

Canadian researchers comparing gamers to non-gamers found that in the long run, gamers were just as likely to recall negative images in memory tests and to report the same levels of emotion in reaction to the pictures as

the non-gamers.

"People who play video games didn't differ in memory, and physical arousal wasn't different between gamers and non-gamers. And there was no difference in how each group felt after seeing negative or violent pictures," said study author Holly Bowen, a doctoral candidate in the department of psychology at Ryerson University in Toronto.

The findings were published in the January issue of Applied Cognitive Psychology.

Video game violence differs from violence in television or the movies because people playing the games are actively involved in the aggression, and in some games, receive rewards and incentives for committing virtual violent acts, according to background information in the study.

Previous studies have suggested that violent video games may lead to more aggressive behavior and irritability, in addition to greater desensitization to violence, the current study reports.

Much of the research on video games and violence, however, has tested gamers soon after they played a game, and might not reflect long-term effects, said Bowen.

To assess whether violent video games affected the brain long-term, Bowen and her colleague, Julia Spaniol, recruited 122 undergraduate psychology students to participate in their study on emotional memory.

"Emotional memory is a really important part of your cognitive functioning. If you don't remember negative or harmful situations, you can't learn from them and avoid them in the future," said Bowen.

Ninety-six of the study volunteers were female, and the average age was 19 years old. Forty-five people in the group had played video games during the previous six months. The remaining 77 had no video game exposure.

Both male and female players reported playing Grand Theft Auto, Final Fantasy and NHL (National Hockey League) games. Males also listed the fighting games Call of Duty and Tekken in their top five. Females preferred playing Guitar Hero and Rock Band or the go-kart game Mario Kart to the violent videos, according to the study.

The researchers showed 150 images - positive, neutral and negative - to the study volunteers. Bowen said some of the images were violent and disturbing, such as a picture of a man holding gun to a woman's head.

An hour later, the researchers showed the study volunteers the images again, but randomly mixed in additional pictures as distracters.

If video gamers' brains had been desensitized from playing video games, the researchers theorized that they should be less able to recall the violent images.

But they found no differences in recall between the two groups. And, the gamers and non-gamers reported similar levels of physical arousal from the images, and described similar feelings when viewing the photos.

Bowen said while this study can't definitively say that violent video games aren't desensitizing people to violence, she said it does provide "another piece of the puzzle, and perhaps, video games aren't having long-term

effects on cognition and memory."

She and her colleague noted, however, that a possible limitation to the study was that the volunteers described their arousal to violent images rather than being monitored for heart rate and other physiological responses, and that more study was needed.

"The premise here is that we think people who are exposed to violent video games might be desensitized to violence, and if they are, they should not remember disturbing, violent pictures as much," explained Tracy Dennis, an associate professor of psychology at Hunter College of the City University of New York.

"And, while this is an important study, what they're asking people to remember isn't necessarily linked to video game memories, so I think it's important to draw only moderate conclusions," said Dennis.

"A lot more research needs to be done on video game violence," she said, adding that in the meantime, parents should try to minimize their children's exposure to such violence, particularly games that reward or reinforce violence.

Dr. Eric Hollander, a psychiatrist from Montefiore Medical Center in New York City, said that some teens may be more vulnerable to video game violence. "Teens who don't get sufficient rewards or reinforcement from other activities may be vulnerable to the rewards gained from risky behaviors, such as video game or gambling addiction."

"With aggressive video games, teens are getting a high level of arousal and reward that they may not get with other games, and they may start to develop a more restrictive interest for one type of game," he explained, adding that a red flag for parents is if they see their child becoming less engaged in other activities that they used to enjoying doing, and they're only playing a certain type of video game.

EA To Buy PopCap Games for \$1.3 Billion

Electronic Arts (EA) announced today that it will acquire PopCap Games in a deal that may reach as much as a total of \$1.3 billion . Last month, PopCap was rumored to have a mystery buyer that was offering somewhere around \$1 billion. Given EA s recent forays into social gaming, the deal doesn t come as a huge surprise.

PopCap is behind popular games Plants vs. Zombies, Peggle, Zuma, and Bejeweled. We picked EA because they have recast their culture around making great digital games," CEO David Roberts said in a statement today. "By working with EA, we ll scale our games and services to deliver more social, mobile, casual fun to an even bigger, global audience."

The rise of social gaming has been good to PopCap, which integrates with Facebook, RenRen, Google, as well as Android and iOS devices. And EA has been keeping tabs on the industry: The developer has been traditionally affiliated with console and PC gaming up until recently, when it s made several acquisitions to establish itself in the social gaming market. EA acquired both Playfish and Angry Birds publisher Chillingo recently, as well as signed a five year deal with Facebook in late 2010.

Adding PopCap Games to this list is another big step for EA's social gaming division. It's becoming more and more of a serious competitor in the social and casual gaming market, likely with intentions of challenging Zynga, which continues to dominate. According to EA's investor statements, PopCap will also help its presence with gamers in Asia, as well as via mobile platforms.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Cyber Theft Illustrates Pentagon Security Challenge

A foreign intelligence service stole 24,000 files from a U.S. defense contractor earlier this year, a dramatic illustration of the threat confronting the Pentagon as it works to bolster military computer security, a top defense official said on Thursday.

Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn revealed the theft as he unveiled a new Pentagon cybersecurity strategy that designates cyberspace as an "operational domain" like sea, air and land where U.S. forces will practice, train and prepare to defend against attacks.

Lynn said the theft occurred in March and was believed to have been carried out by a foreign intelligence service and targeted files at a defense contractor developing weapons systems and defense equipment. He declined to specify the country behind the attack, what company was hit or what the files contained.

"It was 24,000 files, which is a lot," Lynn said. "But I don't think it's the largest we've seen."

The theft was a dramatic illustration of the rising difficulties the Pentagon faces in protecting military and defense-related networks critical to U.S. security.

Defense Department employees operate more than 15,000 computer networks and 7 million computers at hundreds of installations around the world. The department's networks are probed millions of times a day and penetrations have compromised huge amounts of data.

Lynn said a recent estimate pegged economic losses from theft of intellectual property and information from government and commercial computers at over \$1 trillion.

In addition to calling for the Pentagon to treat cyberspace as an "operational domain," Lynn said the new strategy includes four initiatives aimed at bolstering network security by layering defenses and improving cooperation with other network operators.

Lynn said as part of its active defenses, the Pentagon would introduce new

operating concepts and capabilities on its networks, such as sensors, software and signatures to detect and stop malicious code before it affects U.S. operations.

"Our strategy's overriding emphasis is on denying the benefit of an attack," he said in a speech at the National Defense University. "If an attack will not have its intended effect, those who wish us harm will have less reason to target us through cyberspace in the first place."

The strategy also calls for greater U.S. military cooperation on cybersecurity with other government agencies, defense contractors and U.S. military allies abroad in order to take advantage of the open, interwoven nature of the Internet.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, who now heads the Chertoff Group risk management firm, praised the strategy as a "good first step" but said the challenge would be filling in the details.

"It's not put your pencil down, work is done," he said. "It really just sets the table for a lot of hard work thinking through the details of what the plans are going to be, what the capabilities have to be and how we're going to build the various layers of defense."

He cited the possibility of creating secure communities on the Internet for some functions, finding ways to encourage individuals to practice computer security and sharing security-related information more widely between public and private sectors.

"These are going to be hard things to do because they are going to require trade-offs," Chertoff said. "You're not going to eliminate the risk of cyberattacks. What you have to do is minimize and manage those risks."

General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Pentagon must shift its thinking on cybersecurity from focusing 90 percent of its energy on building better firewalls and only 10 percent on preventing hackers from attacking U.S. systems.

"If your approach to the business is purely defensive in nature, that's the Maginot line approach," he said, referring to the French fixed defensive fortifications that were circumvented by the Nazis at the outset of World War Two.

"If it's OK to attack me and I'm not going to do anything other than improve my defenses every time you attack me, it's very difficult to come up with a deterrent strategy," he said.

Cartwright said part of the answer was to build up the military's offensive response capabilities.

"How do you build something that convinces a hacker that doing this is going to be costing them and if he's going to do it, he better be willing to pay the price and the price is going to escalate, rather than his price stays the same and ours escalates," Cartwright said.

"We've got to change the calculus."

The Defense Department unveiled a new strategy for protecting military computer networks from hackers on Thursday, designating cyberspace as an "operational domain" U.S. forces will be trained to defend.

Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn said the Pentagon wanted to avoid militarizing cyberspace, but aimed to secure strategic networks with the threat of retaliation, as well as by mounting a more robust defense.

"Our strategy's overriding emphasis is on denying the benefit of an attack," Lynn said in a speech at the National Defense University. "If an attack will not have its intended effect, those who wish us harm will have less reason to target us through cyberspace in the first place."

Identifying intruders and responding to serious cyber attacks are part of the strategy, he said. But the military now focuses its strongest deterrent on other nation states, not transnational groups.

"Terrorist groups and rogue states must be considered separately," Lynn said.

"They have few or no assets to hold at risk and a greater willingness to provoke. They are thus harder to deter. If a terrorist group gains disruptive or destructive cyber tools, we have to assume they will strike with little hesitation."

Lynn said currently the most sophisticated attacks come from other nations. Nation states are the most sophisticated intruders at this point but can be deterred by the threat of military power, he said, whereas transnational groups have less fear of military retaliation.

"There will eventually be a marriage of capability and intent, where those who mean us harm will gain the ability to launch damaging cyber attacks," Lynn said. "We need to develop stronger defenses before this occurs."

Protecting its systems has become increasingly critical and complicated for the Pentagon. Defense Department employees operate more than 15,000 computer networks and 7 million computers at hundreds of installations around the world. Defense Department networks are probed millions of times a day and penetrations have caused the loss of thousands of files.

Lynn said in one intrusion in March, 24,000 files at a defense company were accessed, and over the past decade terabytes of data have been taken from military and defense company computers by foreign intruders.

He said a recent estimate pegged economic losses from cybertheft of intellectual property, loss of competitiveness and damage to defense industries at over \$1 trillion.

The cybersecurity strategy calls for the Pentagon to treat cyberspace as an "operational domain" - like air, land and sea - where the military must organize, train and equip to take advantage of its full capabilities.

Lynn said as part of its active defenses, the Pentagon would introduce new operating concepts and capabilities on its networks, such as sensors, software and signatures to detect and stop malicious code before it affects U.S. operations.

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"If your approach to the business is purely defensive in nature, that's the Maginot line approach," he said, referring to the French fixed defensive fortifications that were circumvented by the Nazis at the outset of World War Two.

"If it's OK to attack me and I'm not going to do anything other than improve my defenses every time you attack me, it's very difficult to come up with a deterrent strategy," he said.

Cartwright said most viruses are only a couple hundred lines of computer code, but the patches to fix the holes they exploit can run into millions of lines of code.

"Every time somebody spends a couple hundred dollars to build a virus, we've got to spend millions. So we're on the wrong side of that. We've got to change that around," he said.

He said part of the answer was in building up the military's offensive response capabilities.

"How do you build something that convinces a hacker that doing this is going to be costing them and if he's going to do it, he better be willing to pay the price and the price is going to escalate, rather than his price stays the same and ours escalates," Cartwright said.

"We've got to change the calculus."

Amazon Wants Voters To Decide on Tax Collection

Amazon.com Inc. wants California voters to decide whether to overturn a new law that forces online retailers to collect sales taxes there.

A petition for a referendum was filed Friday with the state Attorney General's Office so that voters can decide on the requirement, which was included in a state budget signed into law in late June.

The new law forces online retailers to collect California sales taxes by expanding the definition of having a physical presence in the state. The requirement now kicks in if an online retailer has a related company, such as a marketing or product-development arm, or affiliates in the state - individuals and companies that earn commissions by referring visitors to Amazon from their websites.

Passage of the law, which is projected to help the state collect an additional \$200 million annually, adds California to a growing list of states that have turned to such measures in hopes of bringing in more tax revenue. Its legislature passed a similar law in 2009, but then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed it.

Billions of dollars are at stake as a growing number of states look for ways to generate more revenue without violating a 1992 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that prohibits them from forcing businesses to collect sales taxes unless the business has a physical presence, such as a store, in that state. When consumers order from out-of-state retailers, they're supposed

to pay the tax that is due, but they rarely do and it's difficult to enforce.

States are trying to get around the Supreme Court restriction by passing laws that broaden the definition of a physical presence. Online retailers, meanwhile, are resisting being deputized as tax collectors.

Amazon had thousands of affiliates in California, which received fees varying from 4 percent to 15 percent of each sale they brought to the company. Amazon, which is based in Seattle, cut ties with them after the law's passage.

Paul Misener, Amazon's vice president of public policy, said the referendum supports "jobs and investment in California."

"At a time when businesses are leaving California, it is important to enact policies that attract and encourage business, not drive it away," he said.

Overstock.com Inc. also has cut ties to California affiliates because of the law.

According to the Performance Marketing Association, there are 200,000 affiliates across the country, 25,000 of which are located in California.

Amazon also has dropped affiliates in Arkansas, Connecticut and Illinois after similar sales-tax collection laws were passed there. Overstock, which is based in Salt Lake City, also has shuttered its affiliate programs in several states due to the laws.

Amazon does collect sales taxes in North Dakota, Kansas, Kentucky and its home state of Washington. It collects in New York, too, as it fights the state over a 2008 law, the first to consider local affiliates enough of an in-state presence to require sales tax collection.

WikiLeaks' Assange in UK Court To Fight Extradition

Lawyers for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange asked a court for a second time on Tuesday to block his extradition from Britain to Sweden for questioning over allegations of sexual misconduct, arguing the case was legally flawed.

The 40-year-old Australian computer expert is in the High Court in London for a two-day hearing after losing an initial challenge to the extradition order in February.

The defense's argument centered on the fact that he had not been formally accused of anything yet in Sweden. The defense said it had no access yet to the full dossier detailing the allegations against him.

His defense lawyer Ben Emmerson told two judges the European arrest warrant (EAW) on which he was being held was flawed because it failed to provide "a fair, accurate and proper" description of his alleged sexual misconduct in Sweden.

Swedish prosecutors want to question Assange about three allegations of sexual assault and one of rape made by two women, both WikiLeaks

volunteers, in Sweden last August. Assange denies the allegations.

Emmerson said he did not dispute that the two women found Assange's "sexual behavior in these encounters disreputable, discourteous, disturbing or even pushing toward the boundaries of what they were comfortable with."

But he reiterated the sexual activities that occurred had taken place with consent and, unlike in Sweden, could not be criminalized under English law.

The whistle-blowing website began publishing a cache of more than 250,000 secret U.S. diplomatic cables which angered the U.S. government and caused a media sensation last year shortly before Assange was arrested.

Assange has said he believes the Swedish case is politically motivated.

The U.S. government is examining whether criminal charges can be brought against Assange over the leaks. Assange fears extradition to Sweden could be a stepping-stone to him being taken to the United States.

Assange, wearing a dark-blue suit, sat quietly in court, swapping notes with his defense team and aides. He was freed on bail last December and has been staying at a country house.

Fellow Australian and left-wing investigative journalist and author, John Pilger, sat close by. He had earlier arrived at court to be greeted by a small group of supporters some carrying banners reading: "Free Assange."

In a case which has drawn huge international interest, two judges are being asked by Assange's legal team to rule that his sexual encounters with both women were consensual and the alleged offences do not merit extradition.

A judge originally dismissed arguments by Assange's defense team that he would not get a fair trial in Sweden and that it would ultimately violate his human rights.

Even if the High Court upholds the extradition request, Assange could take his battle to Britain's Supreme Court, the country's highest, though this can only be done on a point of law considered to be of general public interest.

A Supreme Court ruling would mark the end of the process.

Assange has hired a new legal team to represent him after his previous team, which included prominent British attorney Mark Stephens, was seen as too confrontational.

Replacing Stephens is prominent human rights lawyer Gareth Peirce.

She has represented accused militants in high-profile cases, including former prisoners held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay, and the "Guildford Four," a group of Irish citizens whose conviction in an alleged IRA bomb plot was overturned after they had spent years in prison.

In an emailed statement prior to the appeal hearing her office said "it would be highly unusual" for the High Court to pronounce a decision over the appeal on the same day. "It is normal for a written judgment to be given," it said.

EU Court Says eBay Should Protect Trademarks Better

Internet auction marketplace eBay may have to take more responsibility over what is sold via its website or it could be sued for trademark abuse, Europe's top court ruled on Tuesday.

The European Court of Justice said online market providers can be liable if they play an active role in the use of trademarks. They could also be held responsible for abuse if they were aware activity on their site was unlawful.

The court also ruled EU governments are responsible for ensuring national courts can order market operators to act on trademark infringements by users of a marketplace such as eBay, as well as preventing further abuse.

The case relates to allegations of trademark infringement through the sale of branded goods on eBay, lodged by L'Oreal - the world's largest cosmetics maker - in courts in Belgium, France, Spain and Britain four years ago.

"EBay will be concerned by this decision, which means it could be forced to prevent intellectual property infringements by its users," said intellectual property lawyer Dominic Batchelor of London law firm Ashurst.

"The practical and cost implications could be extensive."

Responding to the ruling, eBay said it had made a significant effort to curb the sale of counterfeit goods on its website in recent years and expected little financial impact on its operations or its customers.

"We have updated our measures to the new reality. We started many years ago. They are in place and I don't see what extra costs we would have ... on the basis of this judgment," a senior eBay official in Europe, Stefan Krawczyk, told Reuters.

"Consumers and sellers will bear no extra cost," he said.

EBay, which has used the slogan "whatever it is, you can get it on eBay," operates in more than 30 countries and had revenue of more than \$9 billion in 2010.

One of L'Oreal's complaints was over the sale on eBay of samples or testers explicitly marked "not for sale."

The cosmetics giant also criticized the level of protection offered by eBay against the sale of counterfeit goods, and the availability of goods to consumers in the EU that were meant for other markets.

L'Oreal was happy with the ruling. "(It) is a step toward effectively combating the sale of counterfeiting brands and products via the internet," it said in a statement.

The court ruled that EU trademark rules do apply to offers for the sale of goods located outside the bloc, if it is clear that those offers target EU consumers.

It said EU national courts should assess if any offer did target EU markets, but that in some cases exemptions from liability offered by EU

laws might not apply.

This would be the case particularly when an online service provider, such as eBay, "plays an active role" in managing information related to sale offers.

"When the operator has played an 'active role' ... it cannot rely on the exemption from liability which EU law confers, under certain conditions, on online service providers such as operators of Internet marketplaces," the court said.

The court also ruled an online market provider could be liable if it had enough information to judge an offer was unlawful and failed to prevent buyers from accessing it.

Under current rules followed by eBay, the website blocks ongoing auctions if it is notified about suspicious activity. Intellectual property lawyers said this meant companies such as eBay will now have to be more vigilant on how their services are used.

"This ruling will assist rights holders to force online service providers to be more active in policing," said Iain Connor, partner at Pinsent Masons.

Yet industry experts said online market providers will not be forced to police their selling customers indiscriminately.

"If (eBay) is already monitoring (a seller) only then is the onus on it to investigate further," said Theo Savvides of London law firm Osborne Clarke.

U.S., Romania Arrest More Than 100 for Cyber Scams

U.S. and Romanian police have arrested more than 100 people in a year-long effort to stop Internet fraud schemes that have cost Americans more than \$100 million, the U.S. Justice Department said on Friday.

Romanian police carried out 117 raids on Friday, the Justice Department said. They arrested 90 people in sweeps in nine cities, the BBC reported.

The schemes worked like this: Romanians posing as U.S. citizens would advertise on Craigslist or eBay websites that they were selling a car or boat or other expensive item, and offer delivery if the seller wired money to them.

Once the money was sent, people called "arrows" would retrieve it, often using faked identities.

"They would subsequently wire the funds overseas, typically to individuals in Romania, minus a percentage kept for their commissions," the Justice Department said.

Police have arrested "arrows" or money mules in Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Texas in the past 18 months.

Most are charged with wire fraud or related charges. Several have pleaded guilty.

This type of fraud - failure to deliver promised merchandise in Internet sales - was the most common form of Internet fraud last year, according to FBI data in the 2010 Internet Crime Report.

Amazon Tablet Due in October

Yesterday some hardware orders from Amazon added some more flak to those tablet rumors, which has all but been announced at this point. Today, the Wall Street Journal says that the manufacturer will introduce a tablet before October. Amazon will also launch two new version of the Kindle: One with a touchscreen, one that is "an improved and cheaper adaptation of the current Kindle."

Better yet, the WSJ s insider offers some spec details. Previously we heard that two different devices were on the way, codenamed Hollywood and Coyote. Coyote, the less expensive of the two, was rumored to be based on the NVIDIA Tegra 2 platform, while Hollywood would use the new Kal-El quad-core processor.

While it s uncertain if there are truly two tablets on the way from Amazon, the source says at least one device will have a nine-inch screen, run Android, and will not include a camera.

A tablet from Amazon continues to be touted as the best chance to challenge the iPad, largely based on the fact that it has its own established digital store and ecosystem. Despite the variety of tablets introduced to the market over the last few years from legacy brands like Samsung, Motorola, and BlackBerry, nothing has been quite able to steal the limelight from the iPad. Will Amazon be the first?

Mini DisplayPort to HDMI Cables Must Be Withdrawn

HDMI Org has confirmed that manufacturers of Mini DisplayPort to HDMI cables have been told that their product is unlicensed and should not be sold.

TechRadar brought you the news last week that it was rumoured that hundreds of thousands of Mini DisplayPort to HDMI cables are to be recalled because HDMI Org has deemed the cable system to be out of HDMI spec.

The DisplayPort system is used primarily by Apple in its Mac range, but there's a number of other manufacturers who use the port - including Toshiba.

HDMI Org has exclusively contacted TechRadar about the situation and confirmed that any cable that has a DP male connector on one end and an HDMI male connector is unlicensed and should not be on sale.

HDMI Org explained to TechRadar that there were a number of reasons for this. "The HDMI specification defines an HDMI cable as having only HDMI connectors on the ends. Anything else is not a licensed use of the specification and therefore, not allowed."

It also noted: "All HDMI products undergo compliance testing as defined by

the Compliance Testing Specification.

"The CTS clearly defines necessary tests for all products defined in the HDMI Specification. Since this new cable product is undefined in the Specification, there are no tests associated with this product. It cannot be tested against the Specification."

The news will be a massive blow to the many companies who are making these cables, but the HDMI does point out that those cables with a DisplayPort socket on one side and an HDMI female receptacle on the other (essentially a dongle) are okay. This is because a licensed HDMI lead can slot into them.

There may also be a glimmer of hope, in that HDMI Org does understand that there is a need for this type of cable:

"We do recognise that there may be a market need for a cable solution rather than a dongle solution. However, at this time, there is no way to produce these cable products in a licensed manner."

This will be little consolation, though, for the companies set to lose a lot of money from the HDMI Org's decision.

Passwords Are Made Obsolete with Mozilla's BrowserID

Mozilla released information today about a project designed to put an end to the password. BrowserID requires a user to verify that they are the owner of an email address a single time. Once the email account is verified, users can simply click the sign-in button at a site using BrowserID and log into the site with the email address. This eliminates the step of creating a password as well as clicking a confirmation email link from each site. At this point, the user can make comments or use other site functions that require an account. Mozilla is hosting a BrowserID server for developers, but sites can implement the protocol without the need for Mozilla's server.

The technology uses a public key cryptography to verify a user's email between the browser and the site. This technology is known as "Verified Email Protocol". There are plenty of alternatives such as OpenID and Facebook Connect, but these present privacy and data concerns according to Mozilla. The advantage of BrowserID is the lack of information traded between the user and the site as well as securing user data from being leaked to other servers.

Despite the somewhat misleading name, BrowserID isn't tied to Mozilla's Firefox browser. It works with Microsoft's Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Apple's Safari. It doesn't require direct support from email providers, but they gain greater control if they do support BrowserID. BrowserID also uses Gravatar to pull an avatar image that can be displayed on the site similar to Facebook Connect.

Mozilla hopes to standardize the protocol by working with other identity providers such as Twitter, Google and Facebook. Developers and site owners that want to experiment with this new technology can visit browserid.org. A demonstration of the log-in procedure can be seen at myfavoritebeer.org as well.

Twitter Marks Fifth Anniversary of Public Launch

Twitter marked the fifth anniversary of its public launch Friday with a slew of statistics demonstrating the explosive growth of the real-time blogging service.

"There were 224 Tweets sent on July 15, 2006. Today, users send that many Tweets in less than a tenth of a second," Twitter said in a message on its @TwitterGlobalPR account.

"Yesterday, we saw more than 600,000 signups. It took us more than 16 months to reach the first 600,000 Twitter accounts," Twitter said.

Twitter Engineering said it is delivering 350 billion tweets a day.

The San Francisco-based Twitter said last month that Twitter users are sending 200 million messages a day, most of which have to be delivered to multiple accounts.

Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey fired off the first tweets on March 21, 2006 and the service opened to the public on July 15, 2006.

Twitter now has more than 200 million users.

According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, 13 percent of online US adults use Twitter, up from eight percent in November 2010.

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